

PRISON SONGS

By

Amber Elizabeth Hansen

Submitted to the graduate degree program in the Department of
Art and the graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial
fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master's of Fine
Arts.

Chairperson Professor Judy McCrea*

Committee members*

Associate Professor Michael Krueger*

Associate Professor So Yeon Park*

Date defended: March 4, 2010

The Thesis Committee for Amber Elizabeth Hansen certifies
that this is the approved Version of the following thesis:

PRISON SONGS

Committee:

Chairperson*

Professor Judy McCrea*

Associate Professor Michael Krueger

Associate Professor So Yeon Park

Date Approved: April 15, 2010

“Prison Songs”

While working on Prison Songs, I found that it is in the forgetting of myself that I lose my way, because if I lose myself I lose my understanding of the world that I exist within. Throughout the creative process, I found that the farther I drifted from who I am the more I needed external sustenance. A false relief from these struggles can be found in consumer culture, resulting in further estrangement from my own internal state of being. In order to be free from personal imprisonment, material culture, and capitalistic society, I began to look inward to access an understanding of my own innate knowledge.

I decided to revisit my childhood. Reflecting on this time period, I became interested in my motivations, the motivations of a child. En-quest, I constantly asked what were the original motivations behind wanting to make artwork? The answer became a primal source of inspiration. In a possible reaction to being raised in an environment where intuitive thinking is given little value, I have worked to create imagery that magnifies childhood ambitions by representing childhood and adulthood simultaneously, but with equal importance. This approach of meshing together childhood and adult ambition is intended to break down the barrier between skill and age and to question the value of age. Through this process, I am exploring the difference between innate knowledge and cultured or educated thinking.

This focus of inquiry revealed a fluctuating value of non-inferential and non-referential awareness pertaining to my own development. As a child, I was guided solely by intuition but as I grew older its value slowly began to diminish. In the seven Prison Song drawings, the intuitive self is symbolized by babies looming over visages of illogical reasoning, while the learned and

trained mature self is represented through masses of people that act with militaristic conformity...a homogenized flock.

Through this personal reflection, I began to realize that I am a reflection of the culture and society that I have been raised within, a culture that is rooted within patriarchal and capitalistic ideals. I have begun to wonder how these ideals in turn, perpetuate and mold the psychology of our society. The drawing "Enlightenment" reflects my perception of progress, achievement, and goals within a capitalistic society. The Drawing "Monument" comments on the psychological effects of living within a patriarchal society.

The drawings in this exhibition are collaborations between the conscious states of different ages while the videos are extrapolations of simple childhood actions. By dissecting and juxtaposing these different aspects of being, *Prison Songs*, taken as a whole, creates a layering of time and experience.

The following are selected documented pieces from the exhibition.



Enlightenment, Graphite on Paper, 72" x 42", 2009.



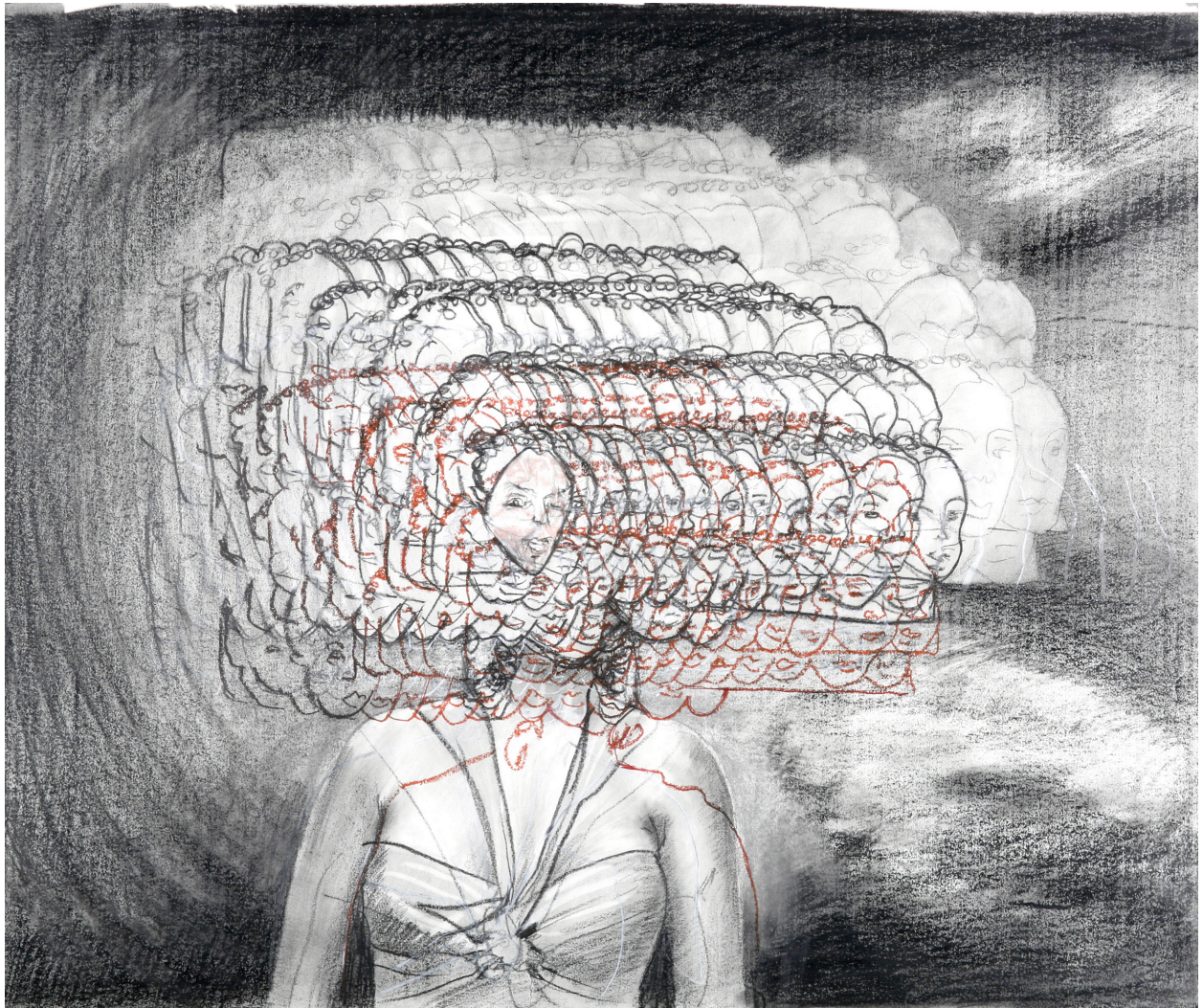
Awakening Intuition, Graphite on paper, 42" x 36", 2009.



Three Generations, Graphite on paper, 42" x 54", 2009.



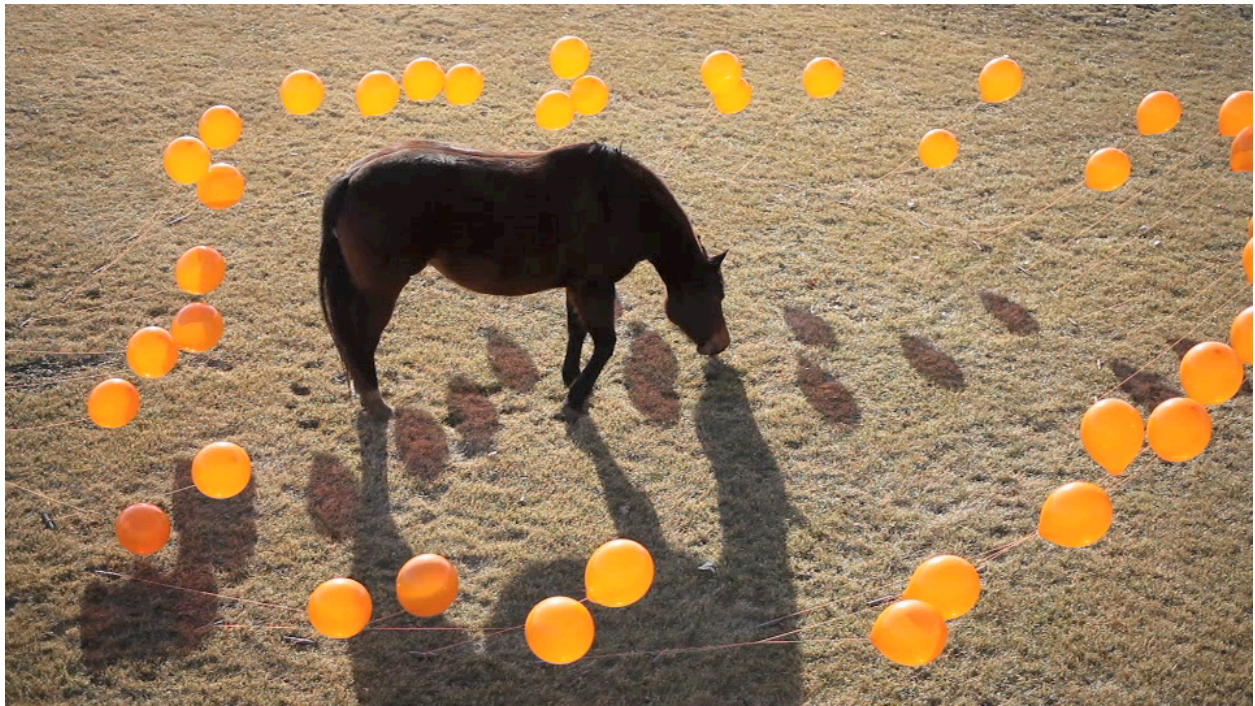
Monument, Graphite on paper, 72" x 42", 2009



Every One of Me, Graphite and pastel on paper, 30" x 36", 2009.



The Shoot Out, Graphite on Paper, 52" x 42", 2009.



The Wall (Video Stills), 7 min. 16 sec. Loop, 2009.



The Run, (Video Still), 4 min. 15 sec. Loop, 2009.



The Dance, (Video Still), 55 sec Loop, 2009